

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, VS

SUBJECT: MORALE IN SVN

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF PAPER, PREPARED AT MY REQUEST BY SENIOR OFFICER OF THE U.S. DIPLOMATIC MISSION IN SAIGON. WRITTEN CAUTIOUSLY, IT PROVIDES A WHOLLY DISPASSIONATE AND OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS OF A SUBJECT WHICH HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF SOMEWHAT LURID AND, ON THE WHOLE, INACCURATE RECENT PRESS REPORTING FROM SAIGON. THE DEPARTMENT MAY, THEREFORE, WISH TO ACCORD A WIDE DISTRIBUTION TO OTHER FOREIGN SERVICE POSTS, TO THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES, TO THE PRESS, AND TO THE CONGRESS IN AN EFFORT TO AFFORD SOME PERSPECTIVE AND BALANCE.

THE STATE OF MORALE AMONG THE SOUTH
VIETNAMESE AND ITS EFFECT ON MILITARY AND CIVIL
SERVICE PERFORMANCE

SUMMARY:

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ALTHOUGH CURRENT REPORTING ON THE LOW STATE OF MORALE AND LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT AMONG THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIET-

NAM UNDOUBTEDLY HAS SOME FACTURAL FOUNDATION, IT IS WELL TO REMEMBER THAT SUCH REPORTING HAS RECURRED MANY TIMES THROUGHOUT THE THIEU YEARS AND HAS OFTEN BEEN VIEWED, ERRONEOUSLY, BY SOME FOREIGN OBSERVERS AS A SIGN OF IMPENDING COLLAPSE OF THE GOVERNMENT. IT IS TRUE THAT THE AVERAGE VIETNAMESE SOLDIER AND CIVIL SERVANT CANNOT MAINTAIN HIS FAMILY ON HIS PAY, THAT CORRUPTION IS AS A CONSEQUENCE MORE PERVASIVE (AND MORE CRITICIZED) IN SOCIETY THAN BEFORE, AND THAT THE GVN FACES EXTERNAL PROBLEMS -- CUTBACKS IN U.S. AID, CONTINUING COMMUNIST MILITARY PRESSURES, A WORLD-WIDE INFLATION, AND A VAST ESCALATION IN COMMODITY PRICES, PARTICULARLY PETROLEUM AND FERTILIZER -- WHICH SERIOUSLY HAMPER ITS ABILITY TO IMPROVE ITS DOMESTIC ECONOMY. HOWEVER, IN TERMS OF MILITARY PERFORMANCE, THERE IS NO STRONG EVIDENCE THAT THE MORALE FACTOR HAS AT THIS STAGE SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED ARVN'S COMBAT PERFORMANCE. OF MORE TANGIBLE EFFECT ARE SHORTAGES OF MILITARY SUPPORT AS A RESULT OF U.S. CUTBACKS AND THE HIGHER COMBAT LOSSES WHICH ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE REDUCED LEVEL OF MILITARY SUPPORT AND ARE SO PERCEIVED BY THE VIETNAMESE. AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN SOME DETERIORATION IN QUALITY OF PERFORMANCE, PARTICULARLY AT LOWER LEVELS, THE ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT CONTINUE -- THE POLICE MAINTAIN GOOD ORDER, THERE IS NO INTERRUPTION OF BASIC PUBLIC SERVICES. AMONG THE POPULATION AS A WHOLE, INsofar AS THE LIMITED DATA PERMITS A JUDGMENT, THE VAST MAJORITY ARE NOT PREPARED TO ACTIVELY OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH SELECTIVE CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT IS WIDESPREAD. THE AVAILABLE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS DO NOT SUPPORT THE VIEW THAT MORALE HAS GOTTEN STEADILY WORSE. GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE IS VIEWED AS BETTER NOW THAN IN SEPTEMBER 1973 AND IN JUNE 1972, AND A LARGE MAJORITY OF THE RESPONDENTS FEEL THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE. CORRUPTION, HOWEVER, IS VIEWED AS HAVING GOTTEN WORSE IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS. IN SUM, ALTHOUGH SOUTH VIETNAMESE MORALE IS PERHAPS MORE VULNERABLE TO PRESSURES THAN HERETOFORE, IT HAS NOT YET GENERATED FORCES WHICH COULD EFFECTIVELY INTERFERE WITH GVN CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES OR THE PROSECUTION OF THE WAR TO THE DEGREE WHICH THE GOVERNMENT DEEMS ESSENTIAL. END SUMMARY.

1. THE STATE OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE MORALE AND ITS PRESUMED INFLUENCE ON THE NATIONAL WILL TO SURVIVE AGAINST NORTH VIETNAMESE
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POLITICAL AND MILITARY PRESSURE REPRESENTS SOMETHING OF A PUZZLE THAT HAS KEPT AMERICAN ANALYSTS CONFUSED FOR SOME TWENTY YEARS. THE ALLEGED EROSION OF MORALE AMONG THE NON-COMMUNIST SOUTHERNERS WAS A CENTRAL THEME OF FRANCES FITZGERAL'S MUCH-REVIEWED BOOK "FIRE IN THE LAKE." IT SEEMED OF PARAMOUNT CONCERN TO THE "NEW YORK TIMES" MALCOLM W. BROWNE, WHOSE ARTICLE "SOUTH VIET-NAM'S CRITICAL PROBLEM OF MORALE" WAS PUBLISHED IN A NUMBER OF NEWS-PAPERS, INCLUDING THE "PARIS HERALD TRIBUNE" ON 6 JULY 1972. QUOTING "SOUTH VIET-NAM'S SMALL EDUCATED ELITE," MR. BROWNE WROTE THAT "SOUTH VIET-NAM'S NATIONAL MORALE HAS SO COLLAPSED

THAT ONLY A TOTAL REVOLUTION IN THE WHOLE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OFFERS HOPE OF REDEMPTION." AFTER CITING THE MANY IMPERFECTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES AND OF THE REGIME OF PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU, THE "EDUCATED ELITE" NOT TOO SURPRISINGLY CONCLUDED THAT SOUTH VIET-NAM IS "A SOCIAL JUNGLE, A VACUOUS ANARCHY OF INDIFFERENCE, GREED AND FEAR" AND THAT IN THIS HOPELESS SITUATION (ONLY) "THE COMMUNISTS HAVE BOTH THE STRENGTH AND THE WILL TO RESTORE VIET-NAM TO THE HUMAN CONDITION." THIS WAS A REPORT IN THE "NEW YORK TIMES" IN EARLY JULY 1972 WHEN THE NORTH VIETNAMESE STILL HELD THEIR EARLY GAINS FROM THE 1972 SPRING OFFENSIVE.

2. OTHER AMERICAN OBSERVERS HAVE ALSO FELT THAT SOUTH VIET-NAM'S MORALE, THE WILL TO RESIST, WAS PERHAPS THE KEY ELEMENT IN THE SURVIVAL OF A NON-COMMUNIST SOUTH VIET-NAM. AMBASSADOR ELLSWORTH BUNKER EXPRESSED THIS THOUGHT ELOQUENTLY AT THE MISSION COUNCIL'S LAST MEETING IN CALENDAR YEAR 1971. HE FORESAW THE GREAT CHALLENGES TO BE FACED BY SOUTH VIET-NAM IN THE COMING YEARS BUT FELT THAT WITH REASONABLE AMERICAN HELP--AS INDEED THE CONTINUING CHALLENGES FROM THE NORTH ARE POSSIBLY ONLY WITH LARGE SCALE SOVIET AND CHINESE COMMUNIST ASSISTANCE-- THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIET-NAM (GVN) WILL CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN ITS NATIONAL EXISTENCE.

3. IN RECENT WEEKS, AS THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS REDUCED MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO SOUTH VIET-NAM, AND AS SOME 18 MONTHS AFTER THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT, THE GVN CONTINUES TO BE SEVERELY BUFFETED BY COMMUNIST MILITARY PRESSURES AND BY THE APOLITICAL BUT EQUALLY DIFFICULT CONSEQUENCES OF WORLDWIDE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS, BOTH OVERT AND CLASSIFIED REPORTING CHANNELS ARE AGAIN FILLED WITH REPORTS AND SPECULATIONS POINTING TO APPROACHING DOOM. THE SMALL SCALE AND SCATTERED DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST PRESIDENT THIEU BY
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RADICAL OPPOSITIONISTS ARE OFTEN CITED AS PROOF THAT THE THIEU REGIME IS WOBBLING. EVEN THOUGH THE DEMONSTRATIONS TO DATE HAVE NOT INSPIRED ANY POPULAR OR LARGE SCALE FOLLOWING AND THE DEMONSTRATING GROUPS DO NOT REPRESENT ANY THREAT TO THE THIEU REGIME, THE VERY FACT OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS HAS LED SOME WITH PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS

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ABOUT THE "ABSOLUTIST" NATURE OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT TO THE INHERENTLY LOGICAL BUT OBJECTIVELY FALSE CONCLUSION THAT IN A RIGIDLY CONTROLLED POLICE STATE SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE. THEREFORE, IF DEMONSTRATIONS TAKE PLACE, THESE MUST REFLECT THE WEAKNESS OF THE REGIME AND A SLIPPAGE OF CONTROLS. IN POINT OF FACT, DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN A PERMANENT FEATURE OF THE THIEU YEARS; FOR EXAMPLE, BY THE DISABLED VETERANS, IN CONNECTION WITH THIEU'S REELECTION IN 1971, WHEN THE EMERGENCY POWERS LEGISLATION WAS PASSED IN 1972, AND AT THE TIME OF THE SENATE ELECTIONS IN 1973. INDEED, MADAME NGO BA THANH, ONE OF THE CURRENT DEMONSTRATORS, WAS ORIGINALLY JAILED BECAUSE OF CONTEMPT OF COURT CHARGES ARISING OUT OF HER 1971 PERFORMANCE ON THE STREETS OF SAIGON, AND SHE HAS DEMONSTRATED AGAIN FREQUENTLY SINCE HER RELEASE IN SEPTEMBER 1973. ONE COULD SAFELY SAY THAT THE "BRUTAL OPPRESSION OF ALL OPPOSITION" WAS MOSTLY IN THE NEWSPAPERS, WHILE THE NON-COMMUNIST OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME HAVE ENJOYED THE DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS.

4. CURRENT REPORTING, PARTICULARLY IN THE PRESS, ON THE GROWING RESTIVENESS OF THE POPULATION, ABOUT DIMINISHED CONFIDENCE

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IN THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEMS OF THE COUNTRY AND A GENERAL PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC MALAISE UNDOUBTEDLY HAS SOME FACTUAL FOUNDATIONS. GIVEN THE GRAVITY OF DIFFICULTIES, IT WOULD BE MORE THAN A SMALL MIRACLE IF THIS WERE NOT SO. AT THE SAME TIME, TO THOSE WHO HAVE ACCESS TO SIMILAR DOCUMENTS OF THE PAST, THERE SEEMS AN UNQUESTIONABLE IMPRESSION OF "DEJA VU." FOR EXAMPLE, ON 5 JANUARY 1972 REPEAT 1972, THE PARIS DAILY "LE FIGARO" (BY NO MEANS UNFRIENDLY TO AN ANTI-

COMMUNIST SOUTH VIET-NAM) PUBLISHED A SERIES OF ARTICLES BY MAX CLOS ENTITLED "VIET NAM WITHOUT THE AMERICANS." MONSIEUR CLOS BEGAN WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT THE IMPRESSION PREVAILING IN PARIS AT THAT TIME WAS THAT PACIFICATION HAD FAILED, VIETNAMIZATION IS A CATASTROPHE AND THAT THE SITUATION WAS DESPERATE. AFTER VISITING VIET NAM, HE CONCLUDED THAT WHILE THE PESSIMISM WAS NOT WHOLLY WARRANTED, THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY HAD SERIOUS WEAKNESSES AND COULD NOT SURVIVE WITHOUT AMERICAN AIR SUPPORT. "ANOTHER MAJOR PROBLEM STEMS FROM AN EXHAUSTED POPULATION WHICH ASKS ONLY ONE THING-- A RAPID RETURN TO PEACE," HE WROTE. YET ANOTHER MAJOR PROBLEM, HE NOTED, STEMS FROM TOO MANY TROOPS. THERE SIMPLY ARE NOT ENOUGH OFFICERS TO EFFECTIVELY LEAD 1,100,000 ARMED MEN. THE RESULT IS THAT ESPECIALLY AMONG THE TERRITORIAL FORCES, SOME SOLDIERS USE THEIR ARMS TO PRESSURE CIVILIANS, AND THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS COULD BE VERY SERIOUS, ACCORDING TO M. CLOS IN JANUARY 1972. IN UOTHER WORDS, THE TROOP MISBEHAVIOR WHICH IS REPRESENTED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS TODAY, ALREADY EXISTED IN 1971, WHICH IS OFTEN CITED CURRENTLY AS THE GOLDEN YEAR OF ARTIFICIAL PROSPERITY.

5. AFTER DESCRIBING THE STRENGTHS OF THE THIEU REGIME, THE FRENCH WRITER COMMENTED ON SEVERAL WEAKNESSES: "IT IS RATHER ASTONISHING TO ARRIVE IN SAIGON AND TO MEET AMONG THE BOURGEOISIE ONLY PEOPLE WHO OPENLY CRITICIZE PRESIDENT THIEU. AS A GENERAL RULE, THEY ESPECIALLY REPROACH HIM FOR BEING AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE. ACCORDING TO THEM, THE NLF IS READY FOR PEACE, WITH THE SOLE CONDITION THAT GENERAL THIEU WITHDRAW....WHATEVER THE CASE MAY BE, THIS OPPOSITION IS INEFFECTIVE. THIEU CLEARLY HAS NO INTENTION OF RETIRING.... HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO GAIN SUPPORT IN THE RIGHT PLACES..... THE MEN OF THE OPPOSITION, UNABLE TO ORGANIZE THEMSELVES AND UNABLE TO AGREE ON A LEADER, ARE REDUCED TO HOPING THAT THE AMERICANS WILL LET HIM (THIEU) DROP.....IT IS A THEME THAT ONE HEARS AGAIN AND AGAIN: 'THIEU WILL NEVER SERVE HIS FOUR YEARS.'

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A SECOND WEAKNESS STEMS FROM THE ECONOMY WHICH IS IN VERY MEDIOCRE SHAPE. THE BUDGET DEFICIT IS STAGGERING. AMERICAN AID IS A VITAL NECESSITY. IT WAS 700 MILLION DOLLARS FOR 1971 BUT IS NOW THREATENED BY THE BAD HUMOR OF THE AMERICAN SENATE. 'THE ONLY SOLUTION,' SAID MR. NGOC, MINISTER OF NATIONAL ECONOMY, 'LIES IN AUSTERITY. AFTER HAVING VIETNAMXIZED THE WAR, NOW IT IS NECESSARY TO VIETNAMIZE THE ECONOMY.' BUT AUSTERITY POSES SOME GRAVE SOCIAL AND THEREFORE POLITICAL PROBLEMS...." WE EMPHASIZE THAT THE ABOVE IS QUOTED FROM "LE FIGARO" IN PARIS, 5 THROUGH 8 JANUARY 1972, AND THAT MONSIEU CLOS PROBABLY WROTE HIS ARTICLES IN LATE 1971.

6. IT MAY WELL BE THAT THE PROBLEMS OF VIETNAMESE PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PARTICULARS OF THE DELICATE BALANCE WHICH GOVERNS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE REGIME AND THE PEOPLE IN VIET NAM ARE SIMPLY BEYOND THE COMPREHENSION OF THE FOREIGN

OBSERVERS WHO ARE ALL TOO OFTEN HANDICAPPED BY IGNORANCE OF THE VIETNAMESE WAY OF LIFE, THE NATURE OF VIETNAMESE CULTURE AND ITS EFFECT ON THE CONDUCT OF THE INDIVIDUAL, BY IGNORANCE OF THE LANGUAGE AND THE LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY. THE CURRENT HARVEST OF SAIGON REPORTS CONTINUES TO ORIGINATE WITH THE SAME INTELLECTUAL CIRCLES IN SAIGON WHO WERE SO APTLY CHARACTERIZED BY THE FRENCH REPORTER OM AND THROUGH THEIR FOREIGN ASSOCIATIONS IS READILY DOCUMENTABLE. AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF A CULTURE WHERE BEGGING IS AN ACCEPTED AND INDEED AN HONORED WAY OF LIFE, NO RESPONSIBLE VIETNAMESE WOULD ESCHEW AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT HIS VIEWS IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE NECESSITY OF CONTINUING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE WOULD NOT EMERGE AS AN OBVIOUS AND ESSENTIAL CONCLUSION. CONTINUING ASSISTANCE TO SOUTH VIET NAM IS IN FACT ESSENTIAL, LARGELY BECAUSE OF WHAT IS BEING DONE BY THE COMMUNIST SIDE. FOR REPORTERS, EITHER OF THE PRESS OR THE GOVERNMENT, TO ACCEPT AT FACE VALUE INDIVIDUAL VIETNAMESE COMMENTS ABOUT THE CURES FOR WIDESPREAD AND COMPLEX ILLS, PARTICULARLY WHEN TALKING WITH AN AMERICAN, WILL PRODUCE IS BAD. IN FACT, IT HAS NEVER BEEN GOOD AND IT WOULD BE MORE THAN A MIRACLE TO HAVE A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY IN VIET NAM WHEN VIRTUALLY ALL FREE COUNTRIES FACE SEVERE DIFFICULTIES ARISING FROM THE HIGH PRICE OF ENERGY, THE CONTINUING INFLATIONARY SPIRAL IN RAW MATERIALS, AND CREDIT PROBLEMS. THE ECONOMIC RECESSION WHICH BEGAN IN VIETNAM AS AN IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE 1972 SPRING OFFENSIVE CONTINUES. ALTHOUGH INFLATION HAS BEEN SLOWED

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FROM THE 63 PERCENT PER ANNUM RATE IN 1973 TO SOME 26 PERCENT TO DATE IN 1974, WITH PRICES STABLE NOW FOR NEARLY TEN WEEKS, THE REAL INCOMES CONTINUE TO DECLINE, ABOVE ALL THOSE OF THE MILITARY AND CIVIL SERVANTS, DESPITE A 25 PERCENT WAGE RAISE IN JUNE 1974.

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GENERALLY SPEAKING, A VIETNAMESE SOLDIER OR CIVIL SERVANT CANNOT MAINTAIN HIS FAMILY ON HIS BASE PAY, THE ROOT CAUSE FOR THE PERVASIVE CORRUPTION WHICH IS REAL AND WHICH SEEMS NECESSARY TO THE INDIVIDUAL FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HIS OWN PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS OR OF SURVIVAL.

8. BEARING IN MIND THE CAVEATS STATED ABOVE CONCERNING THE MOTIVES OF VIETNAMESE WHEN DISCUSSING THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WITH AMERICANS, IT IS A FACT THAT SOME UNIT COMMANDERS HAVE TOLD AMERICANS THAT INTENSE ANXIETY AMONG THEIR TROOPS OVER THE WELFARE OF THEIR FAMILIES HAS AFFECTED THE FIGHTING SPIRIT OF BOTH ARVN AND OF TERRITORIALS. WHETHER THE LOSS OF MORALE IN THE FIGHTING FORCES HAS ALREADY OR WHETHER IT WILL HAVE AN EFFECT ON ARVN'S ABILITY TO COUNTER MILITARY ACTIONS BY THE COMMUNISTS REMAINS CONJECTURAL AND BASED ON PERFORMANCE TO DATE UNPROVEN. THE FIGHTING THUS FAR IN 1974 SHOWS BOTH PLUS AND MINUS FACTORS IN SOUTH VIETNAMESE PERFORMANCE. IN ANY CASE, THE RESULTS ARE NOT DECISIVE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. ANOTHER, MORE TANGIBLE FACTOR IN ARVN AND TERRITORIAL EFFECTIVENESS MAY COME FROM WHAT IS PERCEIVED AS A SHORTAGE OF AMMUNITION, AIR SUPPORT AND LOGISTICS SHORTFALLS AS A RESULT OF CUT-
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BACK IN AMERICAN AID. THE HIGHER COMBAT LOSSES IN RECENT MONTHS, WHICH BOTH OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS SEE AS A DIRECT RESULT OF REDUCED FIRE POWER, TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT AND A CUTTING BACK OF HELICOPTER SUPPLY AND MEDICAL EVACUATION MISSIONS, ARE BOUND TO RESULT IN SOME DEMORALIZATION AND AS A MINIMUM IN A RELUCTANCE TO FIGHT HARD FOR ANY BUT THE MORE OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT OBJECTIVES.

9. IN THE REALM OF CIVIL SERVICE, THERE IS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN A PERCEPTIBLE DETERIORATION IN THE QUALITY OF PERFORMANCE CAUSED IN PART BY ECONOMIC FACTORS AND IN PART BY THE CHANGES OF AND SCEPTICISM TOWARD THE "ADMINISTRATIVE REVOLUTION" OF WHICH THE OUTGOING INFORMATION MINISTER HOANG DUC NHA WAS A PRINCIPAL SPONSOR. THE DEMISE OF NGUYEN VAN NGAN AS PRESIDENT THIEU'S SPECIAL ASSISTANT IN CHARGE OF DEMOCRACY PARTY MATTERS AND THE PRESIDENT'S CHANGING SIGNALS WITH RESPECT TO THE DEMOCRACY

PARTY'S ROLE WITHIN THE CIVIL SERVICE HAVE ALSO ADDED TO THE CONFUSION AND TO FLAGGING ENTHUSIASM. BECAUSE OF THE ECONOMIC PRESSURES, MANY PUBLIC OFFICIALS WORK ONLY HALF A DAY AT THEIR REGULAR JOBS, TAKING SECOND OCCUPATIONS IN THE AFTERNOON IN ORDER TO MAKE ENDS MEET. THE GOVERNMENT'S CONCEPTUALLY SOUND IDEA TO ELIMINATE THE TWO HOUR LUNCH BREAK IN AN EFFORT TO SAVE ENERGY USED IN NOONTIME TRANSPORTATION FROM AND BACK TO WORK DID NOT WORK IN PRACTICE THE WAY IT WAS INTENDED. PUBLIC SERVANTS STILL TAKE THEIR LUNCH BREAK BUT QUIT AT FOUR P.M. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NEW SCHEDULE.

10. NOTWITHSTANDING THE PESSIMISTIC APPRAISALS AND THE SEVERAL NEGATIVE FACTORS, NOT ALL OF WHICH HAVE BEEN CITED ABOVE, THE ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO BE CARRIED OUT. RICE AND OTHER FOOD STUFFS REACH THE MARKET. THERE IS AMPLE GASOLINE. THE NATIONAL POLICE DOES A GOOD JOB OF MAINTAINING PUBLIC ORDER AND PERFORMANCE OF THE SECURITY FORCES DURING THE DEMONSTRATIONS IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER HAS BEEN EXCELLENT, IN EFFECTIVENESS AS WELL AS DISCIPLINE. THERE HAS BEEN NO INTERRUPTION OF BASIC PUBLIC SERVICE. THERE HAVE BEEN NO STRIKES. THE MAIL GETS DELIVERED ROUTINELY, WHICH CANNOT BE SAID IN SOME MORE ADVANCED COUNTRIES. THE CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL AND THE HIGH SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES, MOST OF THEM STATE RUN, HAVE REMAINED CENTERS OF LEARNING INSTEAD OF AGITATION.

11. THE GVN'S HOLD ON THE POPULATION CONTINUES OVERWHELMINGLY
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IN THE GOVERNMENT'S FAVOR. ALTHOUGH THE COMMUNISTS (ECHOED IN MUCH OF THE AMERICAN PRESS) MAINTAIN THAT SOUTH VIETNAMESE MORALE AND THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPLOITATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COMMUNIST OBJECTIVES, THUS FAR THEY HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED IN TURNING THE GVN'S DIFFICULTIES TO THEIR ADVANTAGE. COSVN DOCUMENTS AND OTHER RELIABLE REPORTING REFLECTS THE COMMUNISTS' CHAGRIN THAT THERE IS LITTLE VOLUNTARY POPULATION MOVEMENT OUT OF GVN CONTROLLED AREAS INTO "LIBERATED", THAT IS COMMUNIST CONTROLLED, TERRITORY. THE REFUGEE STREAM CONTINUES ONLY ONE WAY---TOWARD THE GVN--- AS WAS DEMONSTRATED ONCE AGAIN IN RECENT MONTHS IN MILITARY REGION I. THE RISING RATE OF VIET CONG TERRORISM, PARTICULARLY ABDUCTIONS, IS AN INDICATOR OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS' INABILITY TO BRING ANY SIZEABLE NEW POPULATION TO THEIR AREAS EXCEPT BY THE MOST DIRECT COERCION. SIMILARLY, THERE HAVE BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT COMMUNIST SUCCESSES IN MILITARY PROSELYTING AMONG SOUTH VIETNAMESE MAIN FORCE UNITS, A TASK OF EXTREMELY HIGH PRIORITY TO THE NORTH VIETNAMESE LEADERSHIP. HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN SOME EROSION AMONG TERRITORIAL UNITS, PARTICULARLY IN THE DELTA AND THE MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS OF MILITARY REGIONS I AND II.

12. AS FAR AS THE POPULATION AS A WHOLE IS CONCERNED, THERE SEEMS TO BE ONLY A LIMITED FACTUAL BASIS ON WHICH MORALE COULD BE JUDGED.

CLEARLY, THE PEOPLE HAVE NOT RISEN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN THE RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS. EQUALLY CLEARLY, THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION GOES ABOUT ITS BUSINESS, TRYING TO MAKE ENDS MEET, COPING WITH A CRUEL WORLD AND MAKING THE MOST OF IT WHILE THEY ARE DOING IT. THEY DEMONSTRATE DAILY THE VIETNAMESE VIRTUES OF STOVICISM, FLEXIBILITY, RESOURCEFULNESS, AND RESILIENCY. THE THREE PERCENT PER ANNUM POPULATION INCREASE SUGGESTS BOTH PHYSICAL PROWESS AND A HOPEFUL VIEW OF THE FUTURE. IT IS NOT ONLR THE POOR AND THE IGNORANT WHO HAVE BABIES IN VIETNAM.

13. THE HAND-WRINGING ACCOUNTS ABOUT THE TERRIBLE CONDITIONS IN THE SOUTH VIETNAM OF 1974 ARE NOT SUPPORTED BY THE AVAILABLE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS (PUBLIC ATTITUDE ANALYSIS SYSTEM). THE POLLS SUGGEST THAT THE POPULATION CONSIDERS THAT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS ARE BAD, BUT---ALLOWING FOR THE SAME CONSTANCY OF ERROR---ALSO INDICATE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE IN THE EYES OF THOSE POLLED HAS RECOVERED SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THE LOW REGISTERED IN SEPTEMBER 1973 AMONG RURAL POPULATION AND FROM THE LOW REGISTER\$ 8, '7,3 1972
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AMONG THE URBAN POPULATION. TO BE SURE, THE MAJORITY OF URBAN (55 PERCENT) AND A STRONG PLURALITY OF RURAL (47 PERCENT) RESPONDENTS STILL ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THE GVN'S PERFORMANCE IN HANDLING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. THE POLL REFLECTS THE RISING PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE CITIES, A RESULT OF THE STAGNATION OF THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR, BUT DESPITE VIRTUAL UNANIMITY ON INFLATION BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN RESPONDENTS, ONLY ONE PERCENT FELT THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WAS WORSE IN SOUTH VIETNAM THAN IN NORTH VIETNAM.

14. ASKED TO EVALUATVE THE PERFORMANCE OF LOCAL OFFICIALS--- FROM HAMLET THROUGH PROVINCE CHIEFS--- THOSE WITH WHOLLY NEGATIVE OPINIONS NUMBERED AROUND TEN PERCENT, WITH VILLAGE CHIEFS BEING THE MOST CRITICIZED. THOSE WITH WHOLLY POSITIVE OPINIONS RATED HAMLET CHIEFS HIGHEST (66 PERCENT) AND PMROVINCE CHIEFS LOWEST (39 PERCENT). THERE WAS A CLEAR PATTERN OF PEOPLE LIKING THOSE OFFICIALS BEST WITH WHOM THEY DEALT PERSONALLY. COMPARING MOST

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RECENT RESULTS WITH THE TREND OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS, THERE IS A FALL-OFF FROM THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF APPRECIATION REGISTERED IN JUNE 1973, BUT MARKED IMPROVEMENT IN ALL CATEGORIES FROM THE LOWS OF MAY 1972. VERY SIMILAR RESULTS WERE OBTAINED AMONG THE URBAN POPULATION, WITH THOSE WHOLLY CRITICAL OF THEIR OFFICIALS RANGING FROM SEVEN PERCENT WITH RESPECT TO THE MAYOR, TO TEN PERCENT TO THE WARD CHIEF. WITH RESPECT TO THE RESPONSIVENESS OF THE GOVERNMENT, A LARGE MAJORITY OF RURAL (82 PERCENT) AND OF URBAN (79 PERCENT) FELT THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE POPULATION. ONLY TWO PERCENT RURAL AND ONE PERCENT URBAN HAD NO OPINIONS ON THIS SUBJECT.

15. THE GOVERNMENT GOT A WORSE REPORT CARD WITH RESPECT TO CORRUPTION. SEVENTY-FOUR PERCENT OF THE RURAL AND 70 PERCENT OF THE URBAN RESPONDENTS FELT THAT CORRUPTION WAS A SERIOUS PROBLEM. SIXTY-EIGHT PERCENT FELT THAT CORRUPTION HAS GOTTEN WORSE DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS. SEVENTY-EIGHT PERCENT OF RURAL RESPONDENTS FELT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN ACTION AGAINST CORRUPTION BUT 90 PERCENT OF THESE THOUGHT THAT THE RESULTS WERE MARGINAL OR INEFFECTIVE. NINETY PERCENT OF URBAN RESPONDENTS ANSWERED THAT
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THE GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN ACTION AGAINST CORRUPTION BUT ONLY 13 PERCENT WERE SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS ACHIEVED. FIFTY-FIVE PERCENT OF RURAL AND 70 PERCENT OF URBAN RESPONDENTS WANTED THE GOVERNMENT TO PLACE A HIGH PRIORITY ON COMBATTING CORRUPTION.

16. WHILE IT IS NOT CONCLUDED FROM THE ABOVE THAT THE PEOPLE ARE ENTIRELY SATISFIED WITH THE GOVERNMENT --- INDEED THIS MIGHT BE TOO MUCH TO ASK ALMOST ANYWHERE AND CERTAINLY COULD BE CONSIDERED AN UNREALISTIC ENDEAVOR IN SOUTH VIETNAM -- THE GENERAL ATTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE, THE AVAILABLE STATISTICAL DATA, AND PARTICULARLY THE RESULTS OF THE SENATE, MUNICIPAL AND VILLAGE COUNCIL ELECTIONS, INCLUDING THE VOTER PARTICIPATION IN THESE CIVIC DUTIES IN 1973 AND 1974, WOULD SEEM TO SUGGEST THAT THERE HAS NOT BEEN ANY SIGNIFICANT ALIENATION BETWEEN THE THIEU GOVERNMENT AND THE POPULATION EVEN WITH RESPECT TO THE ECONOMIC SECTOR. THE PEOPLE ARE CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT AS THEY HAVE BEEN CRITICAL ALL ALONG,

PARTICULARLY IN THOSE AREAS WHERE THE GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE HAS NOT LIVED UP TO THE PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS, BUT ON THE WHOLE A VERY SOBER ATTITUDE SEEMS TO BE REFLECTED, EVEN WHEN SUBJECTS ARE CONSIDERED THAT ARE BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE INTERESTS OF THE AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL. FOR EXAMPLE, ACCORDING TO SAIGON AIRGRAM 210 DATED 16 OCTOBER 1974, VERY LARGE MAJORITIES CONSIDER THAT IT WAS PROPER FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO SIGN THE PARIS AGREEMENT, EVEN THOUGH AN OVERWHELMING PERCENTAGE VIEWS THE CEASEFIRE AS INEFFECTIVE. WHILE A VERY LARGE MAJORITY PUT THE MAJOR BLAME ON THE COMMUNISTS FOR THE CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS, 43 PERCENT OF RURAL AND 55 PERCENT OF URBAN STILL CLAIMED THAT THE GVN HAS BENEFITED MORE. OF RURAL RESPONDENTS, 71 PERCENT EXPECTED THE PRESENT GVN TO BE IN CONTROL ONE YEAR FROM NOW, TWO PERCENT EXPECTED A COMMUNIST GAIN, 11 PERCENT EXPECTED A NEW ELECTED NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND 16 PERCENT HAD NO OPINION. URBAN ANSWERS TO THE SAME QUESTIONS WERE RESPECTIVELY 89 PERCENT, ZERO PERCENT, SEVEN PERCENT AND FOUR PERCENT. CLEARLY, THE VIETNAMESE DO NOT SHARE THE DOUBTS ON THE PROSPECTS OF THE GVN WHICH ARE VOICED SO FREQUENTLY ELSEWHERE.

17. WE END AS WE BEGAN, WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT EVALUATION OF MORALE OF A FOREIGN PEOPLE IS A TRICKY AND ELUSIVE BUSINESS, WITH THE EVER-PRESENT DANGER THAT THE REPORTER WILL BE MISLED BY HIS OWN PERCEPTION AS TO WHAT PEOPLE'S REACTION OUGHT TO BE, EVEN WHEN THESE PERCEPTIONS MAY BE INVALID BECAUSE OF CULTURAL, TRADITIONAL OR SOCIAL FACTORS. THERE MAY BE A MISREADING OF THE AVAILABLE DATA
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BASE, AND THERE IS FREQUENTLY INSUFFICIENT EFFORT TO PLACE TODAY'S DEVELOPMENTS AGAINST A HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE.

18. AT THE RISK OF VIOLATING THE ABOVE CAVEATS, IT IS NEVERTHELESS BELIEVED THAT MORALE IN SOUTH VIETNAM IS SUBJECT TO EXTERNAL AS WELL AS INTERNAL INFLUENCES. OBVIOUSLY, PRESIDENT THIEU'S UNAVOIDABLE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE IMMINENCE OF A MILITARY THREAT PREVENTS HIM FROM GIVING THE NECESSARY ATTENTION TO LESS PRESSING DOMESTIC PROBLEMS AND DEVELOPMENTS, AND THIS IN TURN GENERATES FRUSTRATIONS. EQUALLY OBVIOUSLY, WHEN BECAUSE OF CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES, THE NOW WHOLLY "VIETNAMIZED" ARVN MUST UNLEARN THE TACTICS ON WHICH IT WAS RAISED AND TRAINED BY GENERAL ABRAMS, THIS IS BOUND TO INTERFERE WITH THE EFFICIENCY OF RESPONSE TO THE TACTICAL INITIATIVES OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE. PREOCCUPATION WITH LEANNESS IS CHARACTERISTIC ONLY OF THE WELL-TO-DO. THE POOR PREFER TO BE FAT. CONVERSION OF ARVN TO A POSTURE OF LEANNESS MAY WELL BE THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE WILL HAVE TO LEARN THE SAME VIRTUES OF NECESSITY THAT HAVE KEPT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE GOING. BUT THIS WILL NOT PRODUCE HAPPINESS OR GOOD MORALE IN THE SOUTH ANY MORE THAN IT DID IN THE NORTH. ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE UNITED STATES OBVIOUSLY HAVE A TREMENDOUS IMPACT IN VIETNAM WHICH ALREADY CONSIDERS ITSELF POORLY TREATED BY ITS ONLY POWERFUL ALLY -- CERTAINLY MUCH MORE POORLY TREATED THAN WERE SUCH ERSTWHILE ENEMIES AS WEST GERMANY AND JAPAN, OR SUCH FRIENDS AS SOUTH KOREA

AND TAIWAN. FOR EXAMPLE, A FRACTION OF WHAT IT COSTS TO MAINTAIN U.S. FORCES IN GERMANY NEARLY THIRTY YEARS AFTER THE END OF WORLD WAR II WOULD COMFORTABLY SOLVE SOUTH VIETNAM'S MAJOR PROBLEMS. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE VIETNAMESE TO UNDERSTAND THE AMERICAN RESOLVE TO HELP VIETNAM WITH BLOOD AND BILLIONS AND THEN TO QUIBBLE, BEFORE THE JOB IS FINISHED, OVER RELATIVELY SMALL AMOUNTS.

THESE CONCERNS AND APPREHENSIONS ADD UP TO A DROP IN MORALE AT ALL LEVELS. SOUTH VIETNAM WAS ALSO SHAKEN BY THE POLITICAL DEMIESE IN WASHINGTON OF SOME OF ITS BEST KNOWN FRIENDS, ABOVE ALL NIXON AND AGNEW. THE POLITICAL, AND PARTICULARLY THE CONGRESSIONAL, PROCESSES IN THE UNITED STATES ARE LITTLE UNDERSTOOD HERE. THERE WERE UNDOUBTEDLY THOSE IN THE SAIGON INTELLIGENTIA WHO THOUGH THAT IF THE AMERICANS COULD THROW OUT NIXON, IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO THROW OUT THIEU. THIS "LOGIC" WAS MORE READILY ACCEPTED BY THOSE WHO MAINTAINED ALL ALONG, CONSISTENTLY IF FALSELY, THAT PRESIDENT THIEU WAS NIXON'S PUPPET.

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19. ASSUMING THAT THE GOSSAMER FABRIC OF MORALE IN SOUTH VIETNAM IS MORE FRAGILE THAN HERETOFORE, WE STILL CONCLUDE THAT THE MORALE FACTOR AS SUCH HAS NOT YET GENERATED ANY FORCES WICH COULD EFFECTIVELY INTERFERE WITH THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM, OR WITH THE PROSECUTION OF THE WAR TO THE DEGREE WHICH THE GOVERNMENT DEEMS ESSENTIAL. THERE ARE, OF COURSE, NUMEROUS OTHER FACTORS WHICH BEAR ON THE FUTURE OF THE GVN, BUT THOSE ARE OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THIS PAPER.
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